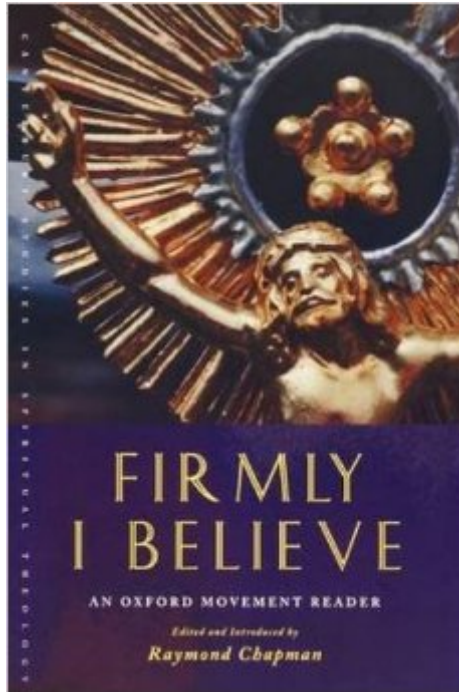


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Firmly I Believe (Canterbury Studies In Spiritual Theology)



Synopsis

The Oxford Movement sprang into life in the 1830s in reaction to the liberalisation of theology and in response to new freedoms for Catholics in society. It was an opportunity for Anglicans who regarded themselves as loyal to Rome, despite the interruption of the Reformation, to promote Catholic theology in the Church of England. A high doctrine of the Church and the sacraments, ritualistic worship and the revival of religious life - plus remarkable social work in slum areas - all characterise what we now call Anglo-Catholicism, still alive and well and accounting for a third of the C of E today. Here the writings of the leading lights of the Oxford Movement are introduced with a useful commentary and explanation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Despite the importance of what is now called the Oxford Movement in the history of Anglicanism, today there is a paucity today of available primary texts written by the Movement's original members. John Henry Newman and, to a lesser extent, John Keble have works in print - of the former, this is primarily due to his continued popularity with Roman Catholics - but given the tremendous literary output during the Movement (which lasted from 1833 - 1845), it is of considerable frustration that it is largely through secondary sources that readers have to learn about what is sometimes called the "Catholic Revival" in the Church of England. This volume, *Firmly I Believe: An Oxford Movement Reader*, helps to rectify some of that by giving a thematically organized selection of polemical works, sermons, novels, poetry and journal entries from the Oxford

Movement's original members. One could simply say that the volume is worth owning because there is no other selection of primary sources currently in print but fortunately, this reader is a fine selection of texts that will put the reader into contact with the lives, teachings, and times of the Oxford Movement. The reader is arranged in 10 chapters:

1. The Oxford Movement: 1833 - 1845 - a helpful introduction
2. The Church of England: Holy, Catholic and Apostolic - largely focused on writings concerning the political and ecclesiological impetus behind the movement
3. Continuity in the Apostolic Succession - continuing the above-mentioned ecclesiology, with a special focus on the episcopate
4. Sacramental Doctrine - concerned largely with the Eucharist and Baptism, historically and liturgically, against those who denigrated them
5. Appeal to Authority - sources of the faith, such as the Bible and Tradition, set within an ecclesiological framework
6. Pursuit of Holiness - dealing with one's own spiritual life, and the calling of all Christians to be devoutly disciplined
7. Church and Society - focuses on both the political and the social-ethical contours of Christian existence
8. Doctrine of Reserve - one might say that this looks methodologically at the question of doing theology historically, and how this ought to shape what we do now
9. Aftermath - the most interesting chapter in the book, I think, noting critics and supporters of the movement, and the ways that those who came after the Oxford Movement picked up and developed their doctrine
10. Assessment and Legacy - a brief, 5 page consideration of the Oxford Movement by the editor

I wish that the volume had been longer; given other volumes in this fine series, the reader could have been expanded by a good 50 pages. In particular, it would have been nice for John Keble's Assize Sermon, which was against State interference in the Church, to have been printed in full; it would have been just as nice for John Henry Newman's Tract 90, which looked at and interpreted the Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion from a strongly Patristic viewpoint, to have had a more front-and-center place. Tract 90 was effectively the last work by the Oxford Movement, and it was met with considerable hostility in its own day. Because the reader is arranged thematically rather than chronologically, perhaps this is to be expected. Reader's do well to keep in mind that this volume is a systematized work; sometimes the selections from a particular work are, quite literally, only a paragraph in length, although each chapter tends to contain longer selections of several pages as well. If I am going to have a reader that is arranged thematically rather than chronologically, I would prefer it to have fewer but longer selections of source material. This personal caveat aside, however, this reader does its job well. One of the nice things that this volume does is give a good selection of the poetry written by members of the movement - John Keble and John Henry Newman, primarily - as well as those that came after, such as Christina Rossetti. Theological works can often be polemical and strident in their orientation and intent; even where they are intelligent or even brilliant, they can be

fundamentally reactionary. The poetry selections, given throughout the volume, gave me a rather different sense; poetry, in my mind, is always more intentional and less reactionary than theological polemics. The poet must truly work at the poem, and in so doing it tends to take a shape that is not easily reduced to the heat of the moment. The poetry selections - above all, those by John Keble - gave me a sense that beneath some of the more strident and snobby facets of the Oxford Movement, there was a lot of spiritual, intellectual and emotional depth. Anglicans have long been known as having poets as some of our finest theologians; this volume gives the reader a sense that despite some of its different orientations theologically, there were nonetheless some deeply historical Anglican currents coursing through the Oxford Movement's veins. This volume, like the other volumes in the Canterbury Studies in Spiritual Theology series, is worth owning by both interested Anglicans who wish to know more about the great figures of their faith, as well as others who are interested in knowing more about Anglican theology and history. They are attractively produced, placed in historical context by their explanatory notes, and contain a large amount of bibliographical material so that interested readers can peruse other works at their own leisure. *Firmly I Believe: An Oxford Movement Reader* is a fine and crucial addition to this wonderful series, and its readers will not be disappointed. [This volume may also be purchased through www.oxfordmovement.org.uk.]

Dr. Ross, who I studied under using this volume is superb at giving outlines from the texts of Scripture. This allows the preacher to then be better equipped to bridge the text to now. He is almost so good, I am tempted to skip my own efforts at it and just go with what he has. But I still do my own to compare with his. He does it well.

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